In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Know this well that a person's greatest enemy which pervades his entire being is his nafs-his soul. This is the same nafs that invites him to wrong-doing and sin. A person has been given the responsibility to purify this very nafs and to keep it in under control. Allah tells us:

"Truly he succeeds who purifies it, and he fails who corrupts it." **(Quran 91:9-10)**

Know that if you do not control your nafs it will become undisciplined, tyrannical and corrupt and you will never be able to control it. But if you keep admonishing it, it will become Nafs-e-Lawwama (the self-reproaching soul) and you may be surprised to see it even gradually become Nafs-e-Mutma'inna (the peaceful and fully satisfied soul) and thus be included amongst those devotees of Allah who are well pleased with Him and well pleasing to Him.

So never be heedless for a single moment nor cease admonishing and reprimanding it; in fact, do not admonish others before you admonish it first. Keep calling it to account; if you ignore it, it will deviate in the wrong direction and become habituated to sin and lead you to destruction. Keep telling it: O nafs, be honest with yourself! You think you are very clever, but there can be no one more stupid than you. Do you not realize that Paradise and Hell are just around the corner and you are going to enter one or the other? Then what is the matter with you that you are always busy in frivolity and merriment, engaged only in your worldly pleasures?

Do you not know that the time of your death and its accompanying agonies is fast approaching you … it may come today or tomorrow … now or in the near future. Whatever is inevitable is near … Don't you know that death comes unexpectedly … there is no advance warning, no messenger to alert you of its approach? It's not about whether it will come at night, or in the day … or that it will not come in childhood or youth, but in old age. Death, O Nafs, can come any moment!

What is the matter with you that death is so close and you do not prepare for it? Although Allah tells us:

"Closer and closer to mankind comes their Reckoning: yet they heed not and they turn away. Never comes (aught) to them of a renewed Message from their Lord but they listen to it as in jest. Their hearts toying as with trifles." **(Quran 21:1-3)**

Ask yourself how you can even dare to disobey Allah. If it is your belief that He does not see you, then truly, you are a disbeliever ... and if you believe that He is watching you and you still insist on disobeying Him, then you have dared to commit a grave sin and

you have no shame. If your brother or employee says or does something you dislike, you get so enraged. Then how do you dare to incur the wrath of your Lord and are so unafraid of the consequences? Do you think you will be able to bear Allah's punishment? Never! Get rid of this thought from your mind ... just stand under the scorching sun for a few moments or bring your finger near the fire and you will find out how little you can tolerate pain or even discomfort.

Are you under the illusion that because Allah is Kind, Merciful and Forgiving, He does not require obedience from anyone ... that He will forgive you unconditionally? If this is so, can you explain why you work so hard to fulfill your worldly requirements and don't just leave this to Allah? When faced by an enemy, why do you prepare a plan to defend yourself? Why do you not sit back at such times, confident that Allah is Most Gracious and He will protect you?

When you don't have the money to get things done, why do you, in desperation and despair, run around to find some means of getting them done? Where is your confidence in Allah at such times? Why don't you say that "Allah will bestow on me a treasure or send me someone who will get my work done for me without any effort on my part?" Is Allah only kind in the Hereafter and not in this world?

O Nafs! Your hypocrisy and false claims are indeed very strange! Just see what your Master has to say about this world:

"There is no moving creature on earth, but its sustenance depends on Allah." **(Quran 11:6)**

But about the Hereafter, He says:

"That man can have nothing but what he strives for."

(Quran 53:39)

This means that He has taken the responsibility to provide you with sustenance in this world and it is not dependent on your efforts. But, He has based your outcome in the Hereafter on your efforts. Yet, you, by your very actions, belie Allah. You work so hard for something which He has taken the responsibility for providing you, yet you neglect the Hereafter which is dependent on your efforts and think it demeaning to work for it ... This is certainly not a sign of Eeman (belief)! If verbal profession of faith was enough, why would the hypocrites be in the lowest level of Hell?

Do you not believe in the Day of Resurrection? Do you really think that after death, you will not be called to account ... or that you can take refuge somewhere and escape it? Never! If you really think you will be able to do this, there is no one more ignorant than you and you are a true disbeliever! Do you think Allah is lying

to you about resurrecting you after you die? If your answer is in the negative, why do you not save yourself from disobedience to Him while you still have the chance?

O Nafs, be honest! If a doctor who has no knowledge of religion tells you that such-and-such a delicious food is harmful for you, with a heavy heart you stop eating it right away and are patient in abstaining from it even when you are tempted. Does the word of the prophets and the miracles they were given to support their message have less impact on you than the words of a non-religious doctor? Does the word of Allah and his Prophet have so little an effect on you?

Stranger still is the fact that if a child were to tell you that there is a scorpion in your clothes, without even verifying this information or asking for proof, you would instinctively tear off your clothes. Does the collective word of the messengers of Allah carry less weight for you than that of a little child? Do you think that the fire of Hell, its fetters, its iron clubs, its hooks, its thorny Zaqqum for food, its snakes and scorpions and its punishment is less painful than a scorpion's bite? This is despite the fact that the pain of a scorpion's bite is felt for only a day or less. This is definitely not the attitude of an intelligent person. If animals could understand your mind-set, even they would make fun of you!

Then, O Nafs, if you know all these things and you believe in them, why this laziness and delay in acting upon Allah's commands? Don't you realize that death is lurking around the corner, waiting to catch you unaware ... giving you no advance notice ... On what basis then are you so sure that it will not come soon? Even if you were given a hundred years respite, you would not change! What do you think of a traveller who despite knowing that he has to traverse a mountain pass, just roams around the slopes tending to his flocks without making any attempt to traverse it? Do you not know that you cannot cross a bridge without travelling on it ... or that without effort there can be no positive outcome. What is your opinion about a person who goes overseas to gain knowledge and then just whiles away the years, and keeps promising himself that he will study and acquire all the knowledge he needs in the year that he has to return to his country? You will laugh at his intelligence and think such a person is crazy who thinks that he can learn everything in one year ... or who has so much confidence, or rather, overconfidence that without acquiring the requisite knowledge, he can become a scholar.

Even if one was to accept that the efforts made towards the end of one's life can be beneficial, and can result in elevated ranks in

the Hereafter, how is one to know how much of one's life is still left? Who knows … this may be the last day of your life! So why not busy yourself right away in the task at hand. What is the reason for putting things off till tomorrow?

Is it because you find it difficult to control the desires of the self, that it takes a lot of discipline and hard work? Are you waiting for the day that controlling your desires or overcoming your lethargy will become easier for you? Listen carefully … Allah has not created such a day nor will He. You will only get Paradise by going against your base desires and doing things which you find neither pleasant and enjoyable, nor easy. The Prophet (SAW) said:

"The (Hell) Fire is surrounded by all kinds of desires and passions, while Paradise is surrounded by all kinds of disliked undesirable things." **(Bukhari)**

This means that when a person disciplines his nafs and forces it to do difficult and disagreeable things to please Allah he will become worthy of entering Paradise which is full of all kinds of comforts, pleasures and agreeable delights.

Just think about it … Since a long time you have been promising yourself that you will do such-and-such a thing tomorrow, but every tomorrow becomes the today and the task still remains undone. If you do not do it today, how will you do it tomorrow? Do you not know that every tomorrow that arrives is in control of the past … that the task that you could not do today will become more difficult tomorrow. If you do not have the will-power to do it today, you will also be powerless to do it tomorrow.

Take the example of a tree with its roots going deep into the ground. If you want to uproot it and your lethargy prevents you from doing it today and you postpone it till next year, the roots will become further entrenched in the ground and the task will become even more difficult. Not only this; your strength for hard labour will also decrease with the passing years. If you cannot uproot the tree in your youth, how will you do it in old age? A tender branch can be lowered towards the ground, but once it dries up, it is not possible to bend it.

O Nafs, if you do not understand these simple examples and delay things from sheer laziness, then why do you think you are smart? What worse stupidity can there be than this?

Probably your excuse is that you cannot be constant and steadfast in your actions because you cannot bear to give up the pleasurable pastimes of the world and tolerate all the hardships and difficulties that accompany hard work for the Hereafter. If this is so, then you are an idiot of the highest order and your excuses are lame! If you desire comforts and pleasures so much, why do

you not seek the pleasures which are blemish-free and eternal… but of course, these are only to be found in Paradise. If you desire comforts and an enjoyable life without hardships and which will last forever, you will have to go against the demands and desires of the self. Remember that sometimes the temptation to take a morsel may deprive you of the whole meal.

Here is another example of a patient. He is told by his doctor to refrain from drinking cold water for 3 days so that he will recover from his illness and then he will be able to drink as much cold water as he wants and for the rest of his life. He is also told that if he does not follow this instruction he will be deprived of this pleasure for the rest of his life. What do you think you would do if you were the patient? Would you say that you would not be able to resist drinking it for 3 days … that immediate self-gratification was a priority, and thus be deprived of this pleasure for say, 300 or 3000 days? The 3 days compared to the rest of your life is not even remotely like your entire life in this world compared to the Hereafter. The Prophet (SAW) said:

"By Allah, this world (is so insignificant in comparison) to the Hereafter that if one of you should dip his finger in the ocean and then he should see as to what has stuck to it." **(Muslim)**

Can you say that the difficulty in controlling your desires is more and of a greater duration than the lasting tortures of Hellfire? A person cannot even tolerate an ordinary inconvenience, so how will you be able to bear the torturous punishment of the Hereafter?

I notice O Nafs, that you are lax for 2 reasons: one is concealed kufr (disbelief) and the other is sheer stupidity. The kufr is because your belief in the Day of Accountability is weak and you are not fully familiar with the concept of rewards and punishment. And sheer stupidity because you have an incorrect understanding of Allah's attributes of Kindness and Forgiveness. You do not realize that He gives respite before sending His punishment. You, who are not even willing to depend on Allah for a morsel of your sustenance and are constantly busy, planning and exerting yourself for this purpose, are truly ignorant. This is why the Prophet (SAW) has used the term 'foolish' to describe you. He (SAW) said:

"A wise person is one who keeps a watch over his bodily desires and passions, and checks himself from that which is harmful and strives for that which will benefit him after death; and a foolish person is one who subordinates himself to his cravings and desires and expects from Allah the fulfillment of his futile desires". **(Tirmidhi)**

O Nafs! Don't lose yourself in the comings and goings of the life of

this world and do not have unrealistic expectations from Allah. Worry about your future and don't waste your precious time. You may have only a few breaths left. With each successive breath your treasure of time is being depleted. You have to live in the Hereafter, so prepare for it as much as you can. As winter approaches, don't you stock up on food, clothes, fuel etc? You do not depend for any of these on Allah … that without the necessary essentials, He will save you from this cold by His Grace and Mercy, although He has the power to do so. Then do you think that the freezing cold of Hell is less than the cold of this world? Or that it will only last for a short period of time? Or that you will be saved from it without taking the required measures to protect yourself? No! You cannot save yourself from becoming fuel for the Hell-fire unless you believe in Allah and obey Him. Was it not enough kindness on His part that He shows you the way to save yourself from Hell and provides you with the guidance and means to do so, the way he provides you with wool and fire so that you can protect yourself from the cold.

Heed this warning, O Nafs! Prepare for the Hereafter as you prepare for this world.

O Nafs, I see that you love this world immensely and the thought of parting with it is unbearable for you. I notice that you have become oblivious of Allah's rewards and punishment and the horrors of the Day of Resurrection. This is despite the fact that you are a traveller in this world and the possessions of this world do not accompany the traveller to the Hereafter. Do you not see the fate of those who passed away? They spent their time, energy and wealth building grand mansions only to leave them behind; their home now is the grave, a mere hole in the ground. It is so sad that you never worry about this part of your existence. Perhaps the desire to be respected and honoured by people has made you blind to this reality. Even if the whole world loved, respected and obeyed you and even sang your praises, do you not know that after a few years, you will not exist, nor will all those people? There will come a time when no one will even remember you or those who revered you so much.

O Nafs, death is very close; do whatever needs to be done right away! Once you are dead, no one will offer your prayers for you, nor fast for you, nor earn Allah's good pleasure for you. You have only these few days of your life. This is your entire capital, so trade with it. You have already spent most of your capital; even if you weep all your life at this loss it is not enough. The army of the dead awaits you outside your house; they have sworn to not leave without taking you with them. The only desire all of them have is

to be given just one day in this world to remedy their oversights. But you do have this one day which they would be willing to buy from you for the entire world and all it contains ... if only they had the power to do so!

O Nafs, do you have you no shame? You are so concerned with your outer appearance in order to impress people, yet you commit so many sins in your inner being and thus anger Allah. O Nafs, is this a sign of intelligence that each day, you are overjoyed when your wealth increases but that you do not worry over the reduction in your life. O Nafs, remember that there is no substitute for religion and no replacement for Eeman; there will be no more opportunities to repent and do good deeds when your life is over.

O Nafs, take heed of this admonition and accept this advice; whoever turns away from guidance and refuses to accept this advice accepts to be put into the Fire. If the heart has become so depraved that it is unwilling to accept advice, then change this rebellious attitude and soften your heart by offering tahajjud (the late-night prayer), pleading to Allah at night, being good to relatives and being kind and affectionate to orphans. If you find this difficult to do, then know that perhaps Allah has put a seal on your heart.

But no! Despair is kufr, and this is why you should not despair. But how can you hope? Is there a way?

Now just see if you are sad or not at the dilemma you are in. Do you ever shed tears or not. If you can still cry, then tears are a mercy and a healing and there is some hope left for you. Pray to the Most Merciful of those who show mercy and beg the Most Generous of those who are generous because your troubles are numerous and there is no place of escape and no place of refuge except with Him. There is no one to hear you pleading and crying except the Exalted Master and Lord. Bow down to Him, plead and weep, express your anguish to Him and ask for His help. He is Merciful to those who call out to Him in distress and answers the supplications of the desperate. All the doors are closed for you except His. The One you are prostrating to is Most Merciful, and Most Forbearing; the One from whom you are asking is Most Noble and Most Kind. His Grace and Mercy knows no bounds, His Generosity is limitless and He can forgive every sin and shortcoming.

May Allah bestow upon us the ability to act according to His commands. Ameen

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